

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**A0430 -- July 25, 2004 -- 1 John 2:15-17 -- Battle with the World**

Last week we looked at 1 John 2:9-14; *Preparing for War*. This week John's readers will go to *Battle with the World*. Last week we found in vv. 9-11 the close of John's section of *Knowing God*. *Knowing God* (2:3-11) is an advance beyond *Walking in the Light* (1:5-2:2).

In v. 9 we found that some Christians can claim to be in the light, that is, they can claim to have come to know God in an intimate way, they can claim to be an advanced Christian but if he is *hating his brother* then he is *in the darkness until now*. Remember, this is a Christian hating another Christian. It's *his brother* not *a brother*. A Christian who is hating another Christian still has time to advance but up to this point he has failed to advance in the Christian life. So, he puts on a show, says the right lines, gives all the Jesus answers, but actually he is not hiding his inadequacy from God.

On the other hand, v. 10 tells us about the Christian who *loves his brother*. This Christian has two things going for him. First, not only is in *in the light* but he is *abiding in the light*. This means that he *dwells in the light*. Day by day this Christian immediately confesses any known sin so that fellowship between him and God is not broken. This way he maximizes his intake of Bible doctrine and assimilation of that doctrine. Second thing he has going for him is that there *no stumbling block in him*. A *stumbling block* is like the trigger for a booby trap. This does not refer to setting up a stumbling block for a brother, but he does not set up a stumbling block for himself. He does not create a spiritual condition that inevitably sets himself up to trigger the trap and fall into sin. He knows his weaknesses and avoids them.

In v. 11 John returns to the Christian who *hates his brother*. This Christian *is in the darkness and walks in the darkness*. This means he dwells in a state of spiritual darkness and he goes about day by day walking just like he is in the world which John tells us is *passing away*. His life is no different from a non-Christian. When a Christian hates another

Christian, he is terribly disoriented. He has set up a stumbling block, a trap that he can't get out of. John says the condition is so bad that ***he does not see where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes***. I quoted Van Til last week who described this condition by saying "Suppose that you are in the cold on a dark December night and you are looking for a black cat that isn't there and you are blind."<sup>i</sup> Hate destroys a Christian and puts the local church in danger. He has created a spiritual condition that causes himself and others to stumble and he tries to cause church divisions and splits. Regardless of what he says he is in the darkness. He has not come to know God on an intimate level.

Next, we looked at six purpose clauses in 1 John 2:12-14. John here is telling those who have come to know God that they are ready to go to war with two enemies; the world and the Revisionists. So, what he does is remind them of their spiritual training. Their General is God, their training manual is the Bible and they are excellent Christian soldiers ready to go to war with their enemies.

By way of reminder, he categorizes his readers in four different ways; ***little children, fathers, young men, and children***. In v. 12 he looks at them from the perspective of ***little children***. The Greek word is *teknion*. This is good evidence that this book is written to Christians, not a mixture of professing unbelievers and true Christians because the word ***little children*** is used throughout the book to refer to his readers, and here in v. 12, he says that their sins ***have been forgiven through His name***. This is salvation. He reminds them that they are saved. The first pre-requisite for a part of God's army is that you have to be a soldier. John says they are.

In v. 13 John looks at his readers from the perspective of ***fathers***. The word ***fathers*** shows he looks at them as more advanced believers. They don't just have salvation; they ***have come to know Him***. This means they have learned and guarded the commandments of God. They've been studying the manual and putting it to work in their lives. Next John refers to them as ***young men*** and he tells them they ***have overcome the evil one***. They already have a victory over Satan. This victory happened at the moment they believed. Reminding them of victories won will stimulate them to press on toward further victories in the Christian life over the world and the Revisionists. John calls them ***young men*** because it is the ***young men*** who have the physical prowess, strength, and vigor to fight battles. Finally, John looks at them as ***children***. He's not calling them ***little children***, that's a phrase that simply refers to their spiritual birth when they believed. ***Children*** refers to a child who has come to recognize his Father. They have advanced beyond being born again to ***knowing*** God as ***Father***. Just like an infant grows to recognize his or her father. So, John reminds them of

their time of initial growth and all that training that took place in the early years to aid their mentality in going to spiritual warfare.

In v. 14 he calls them *fathers* again and merely repeats what he said about them in v. 13. As for the *young men* he repeats the fact that they *have overcome the evil one* but he also adds two things. First, they *are mighty*. This means they are strong; they are prepared to go to battle. Second, the *word of God is abiding in* them. The word richly dwells within them. Remember, the only offensive weapon you have is the Word of God. It is called a sword in Scripture. It is sharper than a two-edged sword according to Heb. 4:12. All your other weapons are defensive. They deflect the enemy's attacks but if you have the Word of God dwelling richly within you as John's readers then you will be prepared to put your enemy on the defensive just as Christ did with Satan when He was tempted. So, you have to know how to wield the Scriptures, you have to know how to use them effectively.

## INTRODUCTION

Read 1 John 2:15-17. Today we are going to go into a second battle with the world. Because we are believers, we have won the first battle. John says if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God then we have overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5). However, the world will not give up even though the world is passing away. Thus, the world wants to make the church impotent. The way the world does this is by stunting your effectiveness as a Christian. How does the world stunt the effectiveness of Christians and the Church at large? The main way is by bringing the world into the church so that the world and the church are no longer distinct. This is going on everywhere in Christianity today. Remember, the second most-mentioned topic in the NT is apostasy. Apostasy refers to the church leaving true doctrine. Here are a few examples of the world being brought into the church and destroying the church's effectiveness;

- 1) **Liberal Theology** was the result when Naturalism was brought into the Church. The scientific conclusions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the name of Darwinism created pressure among Bible teachers. How were they to reconcile the Genesis account of Creation with Darwin's Mechanism of Natural Selection? Many thought the answer was to re-interpret Scripture according to Science, which by definition, is anti-supernatural. We still have many Christian denominations, ministers, and laymen who are still trying these old worn out Accommodationist methods of getting Genesis to harmonize with modern evolutionary thought. Trying to somehow preserve the reliability of Genesis and hold that the earth is millions of years old and that the universe is billions of years old. A new strategy was finally adopted in 1964

with the publication of Morris and Whitcomb's "*The Genesis Flood*", a landmark work that rejected all Accommodationist strategies opting for a Counter-Attack Strategy where we stick to a normal reading of Genesis, affirming that the earth and universe are about 6,000 years old Earth Standard Time.

2) **Neo-Orthodox Theology** is the result when the Existential philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard infiltrated the Church in the 1940's through Karl Barth. Existential philosophy taught the isolation of the individual in an impersonal universe. Therefore, existentialism stressed that the only way to validate your own existence is to do so by an act of the free will. Barth applied this philosophy to the Bible and Neo-Orthodoxy was born. This theology denies that the Bible is the Inerrant Word of God. They will say that the Bible *contains* the word of God, but is not the word of God. What they mean is that the Bible becomes the word of God in an existential encounter between you and God. This is a form of subjective mysticism.

3) **Charismatic Theology** is also a subjective, man-centered movement that came into the Church that stresses personal experience of Jesus apart from the word of God.

4) **Contemplative Spirituality** is the result of Eastern Mystic Religions of Buddhism coming into the Church. The result has been a very dangerous and sweeping movement coming through the writings of Brennan Manning who was a Catholic Ascetic Monk. The emphasis in this theology is to rid your mind of all content so that one can encounter God. Ridding your mind of all content is very dangerous. The Scriptures tell us that we are to fill our minds with the knowledge of God. I'd be looking out for this if I were you and protect your children from this movement. It is very demonic.

As you may have noticed we have moved from a 19<sup>th</sup> century rationalism to a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century mysticism and irrationalism. These are just some of many movements that have infiltrated the church and many Christians are unaware. These things can sound very good, very positive, and very spiritual, but I can assure you they are not, they are the world being brought into the church, and they destroy the distinctiveness of the church as the separate, called out body of Christ.

#### NO NEUTRALITY

In v. 15-17 it is appropriate that John first warns us about our battle against the world because John will later say that the Revisionists are from the world. If we defeat the world

then we will also defeat the Revisionists since they are from the world. This is what we call an argument from the greater to the lesser. If the greater enemy, the world, is defeated, then the lesser enemy, the Revisionists, will be defeated.

**15 Mh. avgapa/te to.n ko,smon mhde. ta. evn tw/| ko,smw|Å eva,n tij avgapa/| to.n ko,smon( ouv k e;stin h` avga,ph tou/ patro.j evn aurtw/|**

***15 Neither love the world (kosmos) nor that in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him:***

First let's look at what the verse teaches and then we'll move to the principle of neutrality. As you'll notice in this verse a very important Scriptural principle is present; the fact that there is NO NEUTRALITY. What this means is that everyone has an ultimate commitment. No one can be uncommitted. In this verse everyone is either committed to the world or to God.

Notice first of all that John is not so silly to think that even a seasoned believer cannot ***love the world***. John therefore commands them not to love the world or anything in the world. Even though John has just reminded them of all their spiritual maturity and readiness in vv. 12-14, they still need to be warned. ***the world*** refers to the moral and spiritual system designed to deceive humanity, to draw men against God, to blind them from hearing the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). The world system is extremely seductive and no Christian is ever immune to its alluring methods and thought patterns. If we get overconfident, we could underestimate our enemy and fall prey to the world system (1 Cor. 10:12). Thus, John warns us not to ***love the world***. Not only are we to refuse to ***love the world***, but we are also to refuse to love ***things in the world***. This refers to the sinful components of the world system which are defined in the next verse. They are ***the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life***. We'll look at those three sinful components of the world system when we get to the next verse. However, in this verse John goes on to say that if ***anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him***. What this means is that the ***love of the Father*** is not being expressed through that individual. In short, that individual does not love ***God***.

So, here we see there are only two ways about it: either one loves the world and the things in the world or one loves God. But the plea of modern culture is that we as Christians are to take a neutral stance toward the truthfulness of Scripture. We are told that if we want to be honest in our investigation of matters not related to "spiritual things" then we must set aside all Christian biases. We are told that it is not really necessary to hold to Christian teachings if we are to understand properly the Civil War, mathematics, the Rise and Fall

of the Roman Empire, or the political nature of the Middle East conflict. Therefore, why not surrender your Christian principles when we speak of such matters so that we can come to honest and true conclusions? We are to therefore, take on a “nobody knows as yet” attitude. We must assume as little as possible from the outset; “we are told; and this means that we cannot assume any Christian premises or teachings of the Bible.”<sup>ii</sup>

Here’s an example of how this happens in our thinking. We are told by many Christians that there is no need for Christian schools, that Public Education is doing all that is needed and that all that is needed is for our children to supplement this education with Bible reading at home. This strikes at the very heart of the issue. This kind of thinking assumes that secular educational systems and the subjects they teach (i.e., mathematics, history, language, art, music, etc.) are neutral. But this assumption completely undermines the teaching of Scripture that there is a particular way of learning about the world and man; that facts taught in Public Secular Educational systems are no different than the facts taught in Christian Schools so why bother with making sure my children are taught by committed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?

So, as you can see, in this instance and in many others, the Christian assumes or is told that it really makes no difference. We should all just put our Christian beliefs on the shelf, and take a neutral attitude. Satan would love for this to happen. If Satan accomplishes this then he has just disarmed you. Christians would be impotent in their walk, their witness, and would have nothing to fight against the principalities and powers of this world. Ultimately, an attitude of “neutrality” would prevent sanctification in our Christian lives. Christ said, that we are “sanctified by the truth”, not by neutrality, political correctness, setting one’s beliefs on the shelf, or removing all assumptions and biases. Immediately after Christ’s remark He said, “They word is truth” (John 17:17). So, as you can see, from the Scriptural perspective there is no neutrality.

No one is neutral. Everyone takes a definite stance and the Scriptures warn us against being lured by the world into thinking that if you want to be objective, if you want to be honest, if you want to have an open mind, then just put aside your Christian beliefs and come over here and stand where I am on this neutral ground. But Paul warns us in **Colossians 2:8** *“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”* Notice that when you fall for this idea you have been taken captive, you’ve been robbed. That’s right, you just got robbed. Unbelievers do not stand on neutral ground in the least. He has not given up his agenda, he has not given up his commitments, he has not given up his biases, he has not put his beliefs on the shelf.

Rather, he stands firmly in an anti-Christian stance. Here is a description of God’s view of unbelievers. God says they are “at enmity with God”, are “filled with all unrighteousness”, “filled with all deceit”, “filled with all evil-mindedness”, “haters of God”, “undiscerning”, “untrustworthy”, “do not seek God”. Does that sound very neutral? Does it sound like these people, when they come to any piece of data; that is, the Civil War, mathematics, the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, or education, are neutral about them? According to Paul in **Colossians 2:2-3** *“all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ”*. All wisdom and knowledge, whether it has to do with the War of 1812, logic, or anything else is deposited in Christ. What this means is that you can’t know anything *properly* unless it is related to Christ because Jesus Christ is *the way and the truth and the life* (John 14:6). We can’t set aside our Christian commitments. If you do then you are willingly turning away from the only path that leads to *wisdom, knowledge, and truth*. That’s right, you are willingly turning away from the ONLY way to wisdom, knowledge, and truth. Jesus said, **John 3:12** *“If I told you earthly (natural, scientific) things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly (spiritual, faith) things?”* Do you realize the implications of what Jesus just said? The earthly things correspond to the natural world, the so-called scientific things of the universe. Notice that Jesus says that if you do not trust or believe His interpretation of those natural phenomena then how can you ever believe His interpretation of spiritual noumena? A rejection of God in any area of life is a rejection of Him in every area of your life. To reject God’s interpretation of the natural world is to reject all spiritual truth. Thus, the Christian is obligated to presuppose the word of Christ in every area of knowledge; the only alternative is a delusion. Professing to become wise they became fools (Rom. 1:22). Practically, what this means is you never, and I mean never, sit down to read some book; textbook or otherwise, without reading it alongside the Bible. You sit there and you compare what is this textbook saying? Is it relating this area of knowledge to Christ? If it is not it is assuming neutrality and neutrality according to the Scriptures is first of all not possible and secondly, as I’ll show; neutrality is immorality. Bahnsen says, “One must be presuppositionally committed to Christ in the world of thought (rather than neutral) and firmly tied down to the faith which he has been taught, or else the persuasive argumentation of secular thought will delude him.”<sup>iii</sup> Here in 1 John, John puts it this way; “a commitment to the world is anti-God”.

#### REASON #1 FOR NO NEUTRALITY: IT’S ANTI-GOD

16 o[ti pa/n to. evn tw/| ko,smw|( h` evpiqumi,a th/j sarko.j kai. h` evpiqumi,a tw/n ovfqalmw/n kai. h` avlazonei,a tou/ bi,ou( ouv k e;stin evk tou/ patro.j avllV evk tou/ ko,smou evsti,nÅ

***16 because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh (sarx) and the lust of the eyes and the vain/empty pride of life (bios), is not out of the Father but is out of the world.***

John begins v. 16 by answering a question we might have, albeit a little silly, nevertheless John answers the question of “why can’t we love the world and God at the same time?” John gives two reasons...first, ***because all that is in the world...is not from the Father*** and second ***because the world is passing away***. In other words, the first reason is because the world is not neutral, they are ANTI-GOD and the second reason is because the world’s attempts to be neutral are IMMORAL and will therefore PASS AWAY.

God has enemies but He doesn’t have any competitors. Remember **Psalm 2:1-4**, “***Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" <sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.***” The Lord is laughing and scoffing at those who are “neutral”? No, He’s laughing and mocking those who are AGAINST Him! Well, if we are not to love the world then how do we reconcile this with John 3:16 which says “***For God so loved the world***”? If God loved the world then why aren’t we supposed to love the world? Well, God loved the world in the sense of wanting to restore the original condition of the world as it left His hand in Gen. 1. But we are not to love the things of the world which find their origin in the world, namely sin (Gen. 3).

Now to the three parts of the world system in v. 16. John separates the world into three subcomponents. Every sin finds its source from one of these three components of the world system. Some have said that Jesus’ temptations by Satan included all possible sins (Matt. 4:1-11)<sup>iv</sup>. In this context, ***lust of the flesh*** refers to the internal sinful part of human nature. Many of our sins have as their source our internal sin nature. You know your weak areas, we all do. Some examples of acts of the sinful flesh are given by Paul as: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (Galatians 5:19-21). These have as their source the old sin nature. The second sin source is the ***Lust of the eyes***. This refers to an external source, anything that we see and wrongly desire (pornography, movies, television). The third sin source is the ***Boastful pride of life***. This refers to the vanities of life, temporal things. Things that people think have substance but really don’t. Particularly material riches, power, or fame. These things are like warm breath on a cold morning. They seem to have substance but like warm breath on a cold morning they dissipate rapidly. They don’t last. The book of Ecclesiastes addresses is all about the ***boastful pride of life***. All is vanity, a chasing after the wind. Every young person



should be instructed in this book before the age of 15. So, the *boastful pride of life* refers to the one who pretentiously boasts about his material possessions, talks about how great he is; someone who trusts in the stability of the world or things in the world. This is diametrically opposed to the humility which Jesus displayed by clothing Himself with true humanity (Phil. 2:5-8). “The problem for the Christian is always how we are to be *in* the world but not *of* the world (John 17:11, 14ff.)”.<sup>v</sup>

## REASON #2 FOR NO NEUTRALITY: IT’S IMMORAL

**17 kai. o` ko,smoj para,getai kai. h` evpiqumi,a auvtou/( o` de. poiw/n to. qe,lhma tou/ qeou/ me,nei eivj to.n aivw/na**

***17 and the world is passing away (parago) and the lust of it, but he who is doing the will of God abides into the age.***

v. 17 gives the second reason for no neutrality; it’s immoral. Attempts to be neutral in any area is nothing more than immorality. Since all that is in the world is anti-God it is obvious that the *world is passing away*. Why invest in something if you know for a fact that you will lose your investment. To invest in the world is like making the most stupid financial decision you could ever make, knowing all along that you are doing it. The Greek word for *passing away* is *parago* and this is the same word John used back up in 1 John 2:8 when he said that the *darkness is passing away*. The darkness referred to the moral religious system of the world that is anti-God. Here John is referring to practically the same thing. He connects the *world* with the *darkness*, both are *passing away*. Remember from 1 John 1:5 that *God is light and in Him is no darkness, not even a bit*. There is *no darkness* in God, so obviously anything that is a part of *darkness* is immoral and is therefore *passing away*. This includes the entire world system; it’s method of knowing, its scholarship, all that is in it is immoral and destined to *pass away*. It may surprise you to know that simply being an agnostic is immoral. Agnostics say “I don’t know”. According to God’s word they do very well know, they see Him very clearly, but they deny this. They try to be neutral and not take a position, but the heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it? God can, and God says agnosticism is immoral. Practically agnosticism gives the false sense of humility.<sup>vi</sup> Neutrality is immoral.

Not only is *the world passing away* but *the lust of it*. That is, this is a full condemnation of the world and all its sub-components. All sources of sin will be condemned, whether it’s the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the boastful pride of life*. All are *passing away*. This is in the present tense; so it is like these things are gradually *passing away* day by day ever nearer to their total and final destruction when the present heavens and earth are

destroyed by fire *after* the 1,000-year Millennium and finally the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth by God (1 Peter 3:7-10).

Finally, John concludes with the one who resists the world. He says, ***he who is doing the will of God is abiding into the age/forever. doing the will of God is equivalent to loving the Father*** (2:15). Jesus said, “He who loves me keeps my commandments”. This is having victory over the world system. Thinking God’s thoughts after Him, being obedient to His commandments, knowing all things in relation to Christ.

## CONCLUSION

You are in a battle with the world. It is a spiritual battle and it is coming on all fronts; particularly through the world system and its ideas. The world pleads with you to abandon Christian principles, to embrace neutrality, to open your mind. But all this is simply a plea to abandon Christianity, to embrace principles of depravity in your own mind. Christians are called to convince unbelievers to abandon their anti-Christian principles. They are not neutral even though they try to be and think they are. Neutrality is anti-God and immoral. No one can be neutral. God has interpreted every fact as it actually is, things in the heavens and things on the earth. We are called to think God’s thoughts after Him in every area of life and every area of life equally. This includes the intellectual realm of education; this includes things earthly and spiritual; this includes everything from the Civil War to logic. Everything must be related to Christ if we are to know it properly. No one can serve two masters. Choose ye this day whom you will serve. Choose ye God and ye will be victorious over the world and all that is in it. Choose ye God and store up riches indestructible, where neither rust nor moth decay. That is the victory imperishable.

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<sup>i</sup> Van Til, Cornelius, *The Conflict in History* (Audio Lecture; Van Til CD ROM).

<sup>ii</sup> Bahnsen, Greg, *Always Ready!* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 4.

<sup>iii</sup> Bahnsen, Greg, *Always Ready!* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 5.

<sup>iv</sup> Notice in Matt. 4:1 that Jesus was led BY THE SPIRIT into the wilderness to be tempted. The Spirit of God led Christ into TEMPTATION. Why would the Spirit lead Christ or a believer into temptation? We know from James that God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). But why does He lead us into temptation? He does this so that our true character might be manifested; that we might resist the temptation and our true nature shine forth in the darkness. It is never designed so that we sin. We know from 1 Cor. 10:13 that there is always a way of escape from any situation of temptation. Notice also that God provides not only the way of escape, but also the level of the temptation and the temptation itself. But God is not the tempter.

<sup>v</sup> Robertson, A.T., *Word Pictures of the New Testament* (BibleWorks 5).

<sup>vi</sup> Agnostics tend to pride themselves in “not knowing”. They are attempting to be humble by saying “I don’t know”, but they pride themselves in this claim. Those who claim to know they think of as prideful and arrogant. As Christians we do know, but we do not know the way agnostics think we are claiming to know. We do not know by reason functioning as depraved individuals but we know by revelation. God revealed it to babes, not by my great intellect, but by God’s grace. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, not the end of it (Prov. 1:7).

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